



Reaction Overwhelming for Whitestown's 'Festival of Lights' Event

New Human Relations Commission Event Celebrates Town's Indian Culture

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WHITESTOWN, Ind. – The Whitestown Human Relations Commission is proud to announce a gathering that's going to be both educational and fun for the whole family. The first ever Whitestown Festival of Lights celebration will bring awareness and understanding of the Indian culture - a culture that's both beautiful and inspiring. "The Festival of Lights celebration in Whitestown is vitally important because it connects our communities," says Andy Markle, the Vice President of the Human Relations Commission. "Like any diverse population, we are woven together by our experiences, our cultures and our mutual understandings of one another and the community by which we surround ourselves. The Human Relations Commission, in conjunction with events like the Festival of Lights, is designed to create a common bond that threads us all together as one unit, one community, one Whitestown."

Whitestown's Indian population has grown exponentially over the last 6 years. According to U.S. Census Bureau figures, Whitestown's Asian population more than doubled to 6.4% between 2010 and 2016. Although a first-time event, the Festival of Lights has already garnered much more interest than expected. The event is sold out on Eventbrite, where 500 people have signed up for a ticket to the free event.

"Being a first-time event, and being the Human Relations Commission's first event, we expected to start small," says Tanya Sumner, the Town's Public Relations Director and the liaison to the board. "We guessed that a few dozen people might attend this first year, but from the moment we posted the first flyer for the event on Facebook, it's just exploded. We're hearing from families in Zionsville, Carmel, even Greenwood that are so excited to come to this event because there's nothing like it in their communities," says Sumner. "We were also surprised to have an event sponsor step forward right away. Whitestown realtor Vishnu Koneru with RE/MAX Ability Plus donated \$500 to the event for the opportunity to be the main sponsor."

The Festival of Lights event will feature professional, traditional Bharatanatyam and Yakshagana dance performances, as well as Bollywood dance lessons for attendees. There will be several cultural activities for all ages, like Henna tattoo art and name art, where attendees can see their names written in several Hindi languages. Authentic Indian cuisine will be for sale, provided by Dhaba Indy restaurant, with adult and children's meals available for pre-purchase through Eventbrite. A limited number of adult meals will be available for purchase on-site as well while supplies last. The event will be concluded with a small, colorful ground fireworks display.

“This festival is celebrated to symbolize the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.” says Raji Muthukrishnan, Human Relations Commission board member. “This celebration reflects the goal of the Human Relation Commission to bring together the community irrespective of race, color, gender or religion and understand each other's values.”

Board President, Kisha Rollins, echoes that sentiment. She’s excited to help organize an event that will allow our growing number of residents to become immersed in another culture, even if only for a few hours. “The ‘Festival of Lights’ celebration allows us to capitalize on our growing diversity and educate the community we live in on acceptance, regardless of race, nationality, religious beliefs, gender, or cultural differences. It’s exciting to see so many people willing to engage and learn about Indian culture.”

WHAT: Whitestown Human Relations Commission ‘Festival of Lights’

WHY: To let our residents learn about and experience the Indian culture

WHEN: Saturday, October 21, 2017 - 6-9pm

WHERE: Whitestown Municipal Complex – 6210 Veterans Drive, Whitestown, IN 46075

About Whitestown

Whitestown has been the fastest growing community in the state of Indiana for the past six years in a row, and has made Niche Magazines’ Top 10 list of ‘Best Places to Buy a Home’ and ‘Best Places to Raise a Family’ for the past three years consecutively.

In April 2015, Whitestown became the first of the communities in the donut counties surrounding Indianapolis to pass a Human Relations ordinance and create a Human Relations Commission to encourage inclusiveness and celebrate diversity.

Media Contact:

Tanya Sumner
Director of Public Relations
Town of Whitestown
6210 Veterans Drive
Whitestown, IN 46075
o: (317) 732-4536
c: (317) 914-7707
www.whitestown.in.gov
tsumner@whitestown.in.gov

